

15. FIRST RECORD OF *ODONTOTERMES BELLAHUNISENSIS*
HOLMG. & HOLMG. FEEDING ON *COCOS NUCIFERA* LINN.

The coconut palm, *Cocos nucifera* is a tropical plantation crop seen particularly in coastal areas. It is liable to be attacked by more than thirty species of termites in various parts of the world. In India, only two species of the genus *Odontotermes* have been reported as pests of coconut palm. The damage caused by *O. obesus* on young plants and mature palms is considerable, particularly on the west coast (Nirula *et al.* 1953). *O. malabaricus* has been recorded as pest of coconut palm in Tamil Nadu (cf. Roonwal 1979). In other countries such as Sri Lanka, *O. redemanni* and *O. horni*, and Somalia, *O. classicus* have been recorded as culprit species of coconut palm (Harris 1971). However, no information is available on any other species of *Odontotermes* as pest of coconut palm. During a survey of termite damages to coconut palms of some parts of the east coast, particularly Ganjam district (Orissa), *O. obesus* was recorded as a serious pest attacking both saplings and mature palms. Besides, *O. bellahunisensis* was also recorded feeding on both young and mature coconut palms in plantations between Gopalpur-on-sea and Chatrapur, Ganjam (Orissa). Interest-

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ingly, it is not only the first record of *O. bellahunisensis* feeding on coconut palm, but also its first recorded appearance in the eastern zone including Bangladesh (Sen-Sarma 1974). However, it has been reported as a polyphagous feeder damaging a number of plants (Sen-Sarma *et al.* 1975).

O. bellahunisensis was recorded in coconut plantations on laterite soils, infesting the roots and lower portions of the trunk adjacent to the soil surface. Its mud-sheet covering over the trunk, was measured to an height of about 12 to 15 cm. It was recorded feeding on the outer most dried tissue of the trunk. In addition, it was recorded infesting the fallen petioles, rachises (mid-ribs) and leaflets of the leaves, and spathes of the palm. It was estimated that the attack on coconut palm by *O. bellahunisensis* was only about ten per cent which was comparatively less than that of *O. obesus*.

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